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inferior to him in the moral scale. A peculiarly subtle and almost irresistible form of egoism comes in on both sides, and under prison conditions only a saintly character could resist its influence. Naturally, neither prisoners nor keepers "grow into plaster saints." It is the system that is wrong.

The best remedy that has thus far been found seems to be the "prison democracy" advocated by Thomas Mott Osborne. Mr. Tannenbaum goes much further than this. Professionalization of prison administration and the destruction of present prison buildings are to him only beginnings. Ultimately he would do away with prisons altogether and would abandon the conception of *punishment*. For these extremer views he can hardly hope to gain acceptance or even serious consideration from the majority of his readers; yet a number of his less sweeping suggestions, such as the establishment of an institution for the examination and classification of convicts and the regular employment of indeterminate sentences, seem enlightened and practical. The really convincing ideas, however, grow out of the author's acute perception of prison psychology. The most striking result of experiments with prison democracy has been the discovery that under this system "the man who is the most insistent upon group approval—that is, the most sensitive and rebellious type under the old system—becomes the most social and serviceable type under democratic organization." The method, moreover, appears to have survived the severest test—that of its ability to deal with the *professional* criminal.

Wall Shadows is a book that is "human" without being in the least sentimental; it is well informed and analytical, yet savors not at all of the academic manner of the professional criminologist.

THE OPPIDAN. By Shane Leslie. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Mr. Leslie must have written *The Oppidan* largely for his own satisfaction: the book, if it sometimes wears the appearance of a satire, strikes one as on the whole a labor of love. There is something mysterious in the care with which the author lingers over the pettiest details and spreads a certain glamour over features admittedly mean and unpleasant. A labor of love, then, surely—else why this more or less rapt dwelling upon traditions that are at the same time more or less effectively exposed as snobbish or unreasonable? But the book seems somewhat at war with itself—there is a subdued note of satire and protest throughout the story.

It would be an easy way of dismissing the whole question merely to say that the novel is a realistic story of Eton. But this would be a mere contradiction of terms. Who can write a realistic story of school life, except, perhaps, as part of a larger story? School life is romantic or nothing and it is romantic in its own peculiar way. A purely realistic story of Eton or any other school would be unreadable—nor would a genuinely romantic story of school life be much more acceptable. It is in vain that Professor Canby of Yale points out that our American college life affords perhaps the largest field of romance as

yet unexplored. School life is neither realistic nor romantic—but youthful; that is, full of fun, immature emotions, and crude thinking. Its charm would be utterly destroyed by the dead-earnest, dry-as-dust method of realism; it will not lend itself to the grand manner of traditional romance; and it is, with all its follies and its sincerities, too obvious for the method of the newer romance, which makes life, above all else a complex affair mingled of love and mystery and fate and brute fact. To the schoolboy and the college man, life is generally simple. Try to write of it in any of the truly literary ways, and you will have the boys grinning behind your back.

And so it is no wonder that Mr. Shane Leslie's story of Eton strikes one as a somewhat perplexing compromise between realism and romance, and also as anything but a good story of the immortal Tom Brown type. One cannot remember another tale which one has found at once so persistently engaging and yet so repellant. The atmosphere is so thick, so vivid, so attractive to any one who has, so to speak, the school instinct, and the maze of meanness, snobbery, tradition, social intricacies, poor ambitions, high ideals, irrational customs, noble symbolism, cheap naughtiness, trifling rivalries, and high-minded school patriotism, is so utterly baffling to interest! To live among the young, to play their games and to share their point of view, is exhilarating; but to be plunged into a fictional world in which boys play football listlessly and a caste of classical masters maintains an attitude of scornful neutrality toward a caste of mathematical masters, one feels to be stifling. It is all as absurd, in its way, as the game of croquet in *Alice's Adventures*, and as dryly inhuman as Swift's *Battle of the Books*.

Perhaps what one misses is merely the note of ingenuous sentiment. The taste for sentiment is not a high one, but if there is a place for it this place would seem to be in the story of school life.

A recognizably veracious picture of Eton before the war, *The Oppidan* unquestionably is; but it will scarcely find its way into the minds and hearts of most American readers. One's final impression is that there is a quality of exclusiveness about the whole performance which is identical with the tone of the institution. Let no one naively try to love Eton through the medium of this story—Mr. Leslie will not let him! And one also feels somehow warned against formulating for oneself any unfavorable criticisms of the school. Eton is Eton!